

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. Apparatus for recording a location of an object having an object identifier, the apparatus comprising:  
camera means for capturing an image of the object identifier;

5 computer processing means connected to the camera means which receives the captured image of the object identifier and processes the image to identify characters of the object identifier;

locator means for providing an indication of the  
10 location of the object; and

output means for outputting information comprising the characters of the object identifier as identified by the computer processing means together with the indication of the location of the object as  
15 provided by the locator means; wherein

the apparatus is mountable on a vehicle and thereby transportable about a vicinity in which is situated an object to be located; the camera means can capture the image of the visible object identifier on  
20 the object once located; the locator means gives an indication of the position of the object once located; and the output means outputs information regarding the object identifier and the position of the object, such information being storable in a computer database  
25 whereby the location of the object can be subsequently determined by input into the database of the characters of the object identifier on the object.

2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein:

the locator means comprises a global positioning sensor.

3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein:

the locator means is provided by the camera means and the computer processing means, the camera means capturing an image of a visible location identifier secured in place in proximity to the object and the computer processing means receiving the captured image of the location identifier and processing the image to identify the characters of the location identifier; and

the output means output;

the characters of the location identifier linked to the characters of the object identifier.

4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 3 wherein:

the camera means comprises a first camera for capturing an image of the object identifier and a second camera for capturing an image of the location identifier.

5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 4 wherein the camera means additionally comprises a third camera also for capturing an image of an object identifier.

6. A vehicle having mounted thereon an apparatus as claimed in claim 5 wherein the first and third cameras capture images respectively left and right of the vehicle and the second camera captures images above the vehicle.

7. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the output means comprises a wireless transmitter.

8. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 comprising additionally a connector for connecting the apparatus

to a external power supply.

9. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein each camera of the camera means in a infra-red camera having associated therewith an infra-red illuminator.

10. A method of recording a location of an object having an object identifier, the method comprising:  
conveying around a vicinity in which the object is situated an apparatus having camera means, computer processing means, location means and output means;

using the camera means of the apparatus to capture an image of the object identifier;

using the computer processing means of the apparatus to process the captured image to identify characters of the object identifier;

using the locator means of the apparatus to provide an indication of the location of the object; and

outputting from the apparatus to be stored in a computer database information comprising the characters of the object identifier as determined by the computer processing means of the apparatus linked with the location indication provided by the locator means.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10 wherein:  
a global positioning sensor is used as the locator means.

12. A method as claimed in claim 10 comprising additionally the steps of:

securing in place in the vicinity of the object a plurality of location identifiers prior to location of the object;

using the camera means to capture an image of at least one of the location identifiers closest to the

object once located; and

using the computer processing means to process the captured image of the at least one of the location identifiers to identify characters therein;

5 whereby:

the camera means and the computer processing means are used together as the locator means so that the information output to be stored in the computer database comprises the identified characters of the object identifier linked with the identified characters of the location identifier closest to the object.

13. A method as claimed in claim 10 wherein the object located in the method is a parked vehicle, the vicinity in which the vehicle is situated is a car park and the object identified is a licence plate or number plate on the vehicle.

14. A method as claimed in claim 13 comprising additionally the step of using the computer database to locate a parked vehicle by inputting characters of licence plate or number plate of the vehicle into the computer database in order to recall the location information linked to the characters of the licence plate or number plate.

15. A vehicle mounted apparatus for determining location information related to a location of one or more objects bearing an object identifier having one or more object identifying characters, the one or more objects disposed adjacent a location identifier having one or more location identifying characters, the apparatus comprising:

imaging means for obtaining an image of the object identifier and for obtaining an image of the

location identifier;

5 a processor coupled at least to the first and second imaging devices for processing the object identifier to determine the object identifying characters, and for processing the location identifier to determine the location identifying characters; and

a wireless communication device for transmitting information indicative of the object identifying characters and the location identifying characters.

16. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the imaging means further comprise:

5 a first imaging device for capturing an image of the object identifier; and  
a second imaging device for capturing an image of the location identifier.

17. The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the first and second imaging devices comprise infrared cameras.

18. The apparatus of claim 15 further comprising:

a geographic location determining device for determining location co-ordinates; and  
5 the wireless communication device for transmitting information indicative of the location co-ordinates.